

Governor's Budget Testimony
Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly
February 16, 2016
Liz Shapiro, Executive Director
Connecticut League of History Organizations

Good evening, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and committee members. My name is Elizabeth Shapiro, and I am Executive Director of the Connecticut League of History Organizations. The League, with funding support from Connecticut Humanities, is the primary organization working to build the effectiveness of heritage-based organizations in Connecticut.

I am here today to urge you to support full funding for Connecticut Humanities. Indeed, it's what we learn from the humanities that motivate citizens across Connecticut to brave the weather and to travel to Hartford to exercise their right to speak passionately in front of their elected representatives about what matters. A civil society – government in action – is the humanities in action.

As you know, funding allocated to Connecticut Humanities is a miniscule portion of the overall state budget, but its impact is disproportionately strong. If you know the story *Horton Hears a Who*, by beloved author Dr. Seuss, you understand what I mean. The book tells the tale of Horton the Elephant, who, while splashing in a pool, hears a small speck of dust talking to him. Horton's best guess is that a small person lives on the speck, so he places it on a clover, vowing to protect it. He later discovers that the speck is actually a tiny planet, home to a community called Whoville, where microscopic creatures called Whos live. The Mayor of Whoville asks Horton to protect them from harm, which Horton happily agrees to do, proclaiming throughout the book that "a person's a person, no matter how small."

The humanities and Connecticut Humanities in particular, is akin to that tiny voice that Horton hears, and finds so compelling, so meaningful, that he can not rest until that message has been decoded, shared, and ultimately, protected. Connecticut Humanities is a tiny component of the vast state budget – but its voice is strong and compelling. It is heard in the hundreds of museum exhibits at places from the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center to the Torrington Historical Society; in the lectures by renowned authors and historians at the Madison Historical Society and the

Fairfield Museum and History Center, it is heard in Book Voyagers Programs, Poetry Out Loud performances, and Connecticut History Day projects.

Sixty percent of the state funding that goes to Connecticut Humanities, is re-granted on a competitive basis to historical societies, museums, theaters, historic sites, and libraries across the state. Connecticut Humanities is the only state-wide source of funding to support programs in the humanities – programs that teach us to think, to reason, to create and to explore – in the state.

Defunding and significantly reducing state support for Connecticut Humanities will affect the cultural resources of every town and city in Connecticut. It's a small investment in an organization that has over 40 years of experience in understanding and supporting the needs of the heritage and library communities.